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MORE ON THE ENDING -*UÍDO*

Professor Hills's rejoinder in the December number of *HISPANIA* to the article of Professor Morley, printed in the October issue, contains certain statements which require qualification or correction, and some of these statements are of particular importance since they form the basis of his argument.

Professor Hills tells us: "The poets usually count *huido* as a word of three syllables" (p. 300). There is, I believe, substantial agreement on this point, although the usage is by no means as uniform today as it was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But there is an important corollary to this statement, which Professor Hills has omitted, namely, that in the great majority of cases in which *huido* shows diaeresis, the stress upon the *i* is reinforced by a main or a secondary line-stress, and that when the word-stress is not so reinforced, there is synaeresis in the majority of cases.

This practice, common in a number of words which contain a diphthong arising from the loss of an intervocalic consonant, such as *huir*, *ruido*, *juicio*, *cruel*, *fiar*, and *liar*, or one which represents an original Latin combination, such as *ruina* or *suave*, dates from the introduction of the Italian verse forms into Spain and has remained a part of the traditional technique of poetry. It is precisely parallel to the similar practice of avoiding synaloepha before the main and secondary line-stress. The evidence of the poets, then, is not valid for proof of the normal pronunciation of *huido*, although it is interesting as revealing a general Spanish tendency to throw added emphasis upon the main stress in a phrase by breaking it from a vowel immediately preceding it.

In the following paragraph, Professor Hills quotes from Sr. Navarro Tomás's *Manual de pronunciación española* (pp. 198-99) a transcript of the phrase *la huída*, giving the impression that the Spanish phonetician would pronounce the phrase "*lāūida*". He has, however, failed to print the note of Navarro Tomás, which states: "la *u* acaba muy semejante a una *w*." In other words, the pronunciation is approximately *lāuwida*."

Such a pronunciation is, as a matter of fact, almost inevitable in normal speech. Either of the high, or weak vowels, (*i*, *u*) when found between two vowels will become semi-consonantal, but they will also be heard as a semi-vocalic glide at the close of the first vowel.

An example of an *i* in this position is offered by the phrase “*voy a*” which is pronounced either “*voija*” or “*voīya*” (Cf. Navarro Tomás, op. cit., p. 213, N. 12). Here the glide is clearly perceptible because the *o* is open. When the *o* is relaxed, that is, further forward and higher, the glide is hardly distinguishable, so that “*seguro y apuesto*” sounds almost as “*seguroyapuesto*”. (id. p. 191.) Similarly, even an atonic *o* between two vowels tends to become semi-consonantal, so that “*padre o hijo*” in rapid speech sounds as “*padrēōwixō*”, in which both of the *o*’s are of the relaxed type. The transcription of Navarro Tomás is not, then, an evidence of the trisyllabic pronunciation of *huída*.

It is true that the Spanish scholar states (p. 124) that *huir*, *ruina*, *ruido*, *ruin*, *viuda*, *suave* and *cruel* show diaeresis, but he qualifies that statement by adding that the vowel combinations in these words in particular readily become diphthongs in speech and in the only transcript of his in which any of these words appears, he prefers “*rwido*” to “*ruido*”, even though the word-stress is reinforced by a phrase-stress. (p. 191.) It is my personal conviction that the vowels in all these words are pronounced with synaeresis in normal speech, unless there is a special desire to secure emphasis, in which case diaeresis will occur.

In those cases in which diaeresis occurs, the *u* is pronounced as an open *u* and never as a semi-vocalic *u* alone. Professor Hills’s remarks on this subject (p. 301) show some confusion. In the first place, we must distinguish between a real initial group, that is, initial in a breath-group, and an apparent initial. Vowel groups beginning with *u-*, of which *ue* is the most common, are regularly pronounced *w-*. When that group begins a breath-group, there is a real closure in popular speech, giving *gw-* when the closure is velar, and *bw-* when the closure is labial. In connected speech, however, a group which is initial in a word may become intervocalic in the phrase. So in “*la huida*” the *ui* is not initial but intervocalic, and the *u* is treated as other intervocalic *i*’s and *u*’s, that is, it is pronounced “*uw*” or “*w*”. In general it may be said that *u* is never semi-vocalic unless it follows a stressed vowel; so in “*lo único*” there is a shift of stress which results in “*lōúnico*”.

If the statement of the Academy that *huir* is a dissyllable were accurate as far as normal speech is concerned, which does not appear to be the case, their use of the accent to denote diaeresis is still wholly inconsistent, as Professor Morley pointed out (pp. 188–89), not

merely in the groups beginning with *u* (*suave, ruido, cruel*, etc.) but also in the numerous verbal forms with *i*, such as *guiar, fiar, enfriar, variar*, etc.

There is, however, a possible explanation of their adoption of the accent in *huído, restituído*, and other past participles, which neither Professor Morley nor Professor Hills has mentioned: that is the analogy of other past participles in *-ido*, following a vowel, such as *caído, reído, and oído*. It will be objected that such an analogy applies with equal force to the infinitives *huír* and *restituir*, on the basis of *reír* and *oír*. So it does in fact. But we must remember that the Academy's conversion to the accent in *reír* and *oír* is recent, while its acceptance of the accent in past participles goes back to 1874. If analogy be the determining influence, and this is a question which involves also the accentuation of the monosyllabic preterites, *dí, dió, fuí, fué, ví, vió*, and *rió*, we may expect to find academic approval of *huír* and *restituir* before the end of another generation.

As teachers, it seems to me that we ought rather to be interested in following some consistent, logical practice than in accepting the arbitrary *dicta* of an academy. In matters of accentuation that leaves open to us two courses, either that we should teach that the fundamental rules of accentuation (laid down by the Academy, incidentally, on a soundly logical basis) should be followed without exception, which means that he shall write, *huido, restituir, vi, fue, dio, rio*, distinguishing between *dí* (preterite of *dar*) and *di* (imperative of *decir*), or else that we should say that the rules should be followed in all cases except in certain verb forms, which through analogy bear a written accent, and write, *huído, restituír, ví, fué, dió, rió*, distinguishing *dí* and *di*, just as we distinguish *mí* and *mi*.

If we do accept these forms with accents derived from verbal analogy, it is idle to defend them as representing phonetic pronunciation, or to attempt to justify them logically. Unless we are willing to admit that analogy is a form of logic which bears great weight in the formation of language and even in the establishment of orthography.

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